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In a Chonti family three or four 163 •
children, arriving at intervals of two or three years, seemed to me to be the rule. Among the Tobas and the Mataco the children were somewhat more numerous, especially in families where the man had two or more wives. Whether the matter is or is not arranged by abortion, I cannot say.

Abortion is practised by unmarried women who become pregnant 847
in consequence of their sexual licentiousness. I have never seen unmarried women with children in any tribe. Married women also have recourse to feticide or infanticide when they have been abandoned by their husbands. Similarly, as I have stated before, a Toba man may kill the newborn child of his married daughter if his son-in-law has incurred his dislike.

Abortions are effected by the Chaco women by mechanical treatment. The woman kills the foetus by beating her abdomen and after that presses it out with her thumbs. She may perform the operation herself or be aided by some old woman. This is done fairly early, generally in the third or fourth month of pregnancy. The operation is said to cause the woman some pain, but does not seriously affect her health. Poisonous drugs or other abortive means are not used by the Chaco Indians.

If the Indians find nothing immoral in infanticide, this of course is still less the case with abortion. It is wholly a private affair of the woman or of her family, with which the community as such does not interfere. A feticide certainly does not cause her more remorse than the extraction of a tooth. Custom is very strict on this point, not only among the Chaco tribes but among all South American Indians.